



Daniel Ellsberg

Casualties of bombings in Japan

1 message

mark selden

Wed, Mar 10, 2010 at 3:10 PM

To: Satoko Norimatsu

Cc: Jean Downey

peter kuznick <
 yuki tanaka
 >, Joseph Gerson

du>, daniel ellsberg
 :jp>, "Marilyn B. Young"

, gavan mccormack
 du>, richardm

Dear Satoko, Jean, Dan, Peter, Gavan, Yuki, Marilyn, Dick, Joseph,

For those of you just joining this perhaps too lengthy discussion, the subject is the relationship between the firebombing and the atomic bombing of Japan, including casualties/deaths, the memories of each among Japanese, the differential commemoration in museums and official discourse, and the differential compensation of bomb victims: civilian vs. military, firebombing vs. atomic bombing.

Apologies for adding just a little to what you already know about firebombing/atomic bombing of Japanese cities.

But I thought both that Satoko as well as Peter had added information that may be new to some, but I wanted to be sure that you were familiar with my own attempt to sort through the issues.

So here's the correspondence that Satoko just circulated and my article on firebombing.

I think that we should see the firebombing of Japanese cities both in light of and in relation to the history of firebombing that Yuki and Marilyn have provided in their book *Bombing Civilians*, and including British, Japanese, German and American bombings from c. 1912 through the war in Europe, and the atomic bombings that followed. I also believe that it is appropriate to raise issues of the responsibility of both the Japanese and the American states to recognize and provide relief for victims of both fire bombing and atomic bombing comparable to the payments to Japanese soldiers' families that (as I understand it) continue to this day.

That means, contrary to important sectors of the anti-nuclear movement, who make no mention of the firebombing, and who stress only what is new in the atomic bombing (particularly radiation), I hope to see the movement broadened in this way. I understand Dan's comments as opening up this possibility.

I'm attaching my discussion of the firebombing . . . a version slightly different from the chapter in Tanaka and Young, *Bombing Civilians*.

A Forgotten Holocaust: US Bombing Strategy, the Destruction of Japanese Cities and the American Way of War from World War II to Iraq

<http://japanfocus.org/-Mark-Selden/2414>

Here's one other paper that puts the discussion in some perspective.

Japanese and American War Atrocities, Historical Memory and Reconciliation: World War II to Today

<http://japanfocus.org/-Mark-Selden/2724>

Note that I raise the possibility that the casualty figures for the Tokyo firebombing of March 9/10 was considerably larger than the US-Japanese figures.

mark

p.s. I look forward to seeing you this weekend, Dan.

On 3/10/10 4:48 PM, Satoko Norimatsu wrote:

Jean,
 Here is the exchange between Dan, Peter and me and it actually originates in Mark's message to Dan. Now the loop is complete ;) Peter quoting me below contains an answer to your question. There are other details that could be more than you want or be of interest to you. I know the people who run the Tokyo Air Raid Center so if you ever get a chance to visit there I will introduce them to you. I mentioned last year my father was 82 and today 81. This is the first mystery I need to solve ;)
 Love,
 Satoko

Forwarded by Satoko Norimatsu

----- Original Message -----
 Date: Wed, 02 Sep 2009 00:53:23 -0700
 Subject: Re: Casualties of air-bombings in Japan

 Hello Dan and Peter,
 Here is the information from the Tokyo Air Raid Centre's Seiji Ishibashi.
 According to the Tokyo Newspaper Research in August, 1994
 The domestic (within Japan) war-dead were approximately 950,000.
 Of those, approx. 560,000 are civilians.
 Approx. 390,000 are military personnel, "gunzoku," (military employees of some sort), and those who died in the Battle of Okinawa.
 (my note: this category "gunzoku" might blur the distinction between military and civilians. As you know, many civilians were mobilized to work at military factories. Also, most of the "military" were civilians drafted against their will. So the real significance of distinguishing military and civilians is in question as well.)
 In the Battle of Okinawa, 94,136 military and "gunzoku" died, and approx. 94,000 civilians died.
 Therefore, excluding those who died in the Battle of Okinawa, the military and "gunzoku" who died within Japan were approximately 200,000.
 Again, "gunzoku" is an ambiguous category. By its strict definition, military nurses definitely belong to this category. However, the mobilized students were sometimes recognized as "gunzoku" but not always.
 For example, Toyokawa City in Aichi had a Navy factory, which was completely destroyed by the August 7th bombing. It is, however, doubtful that the death statistics of Toyokawa includes the mobilized students.
 Given that more than 90,000 military and "gunzoku" died in Okinawa, he questions the number 200,000 elsewhere in Japan, as there was no other major battle within the main lands of Japan.
 I hope this is helpful if not further confusing. Let me know if you get the source of the Fog of War numbers.
 Best,
 Satoko
 On Sat, 22 Aug 2009 13:27:25 -0700
 Daniel Ellsberg

> Dear Satoko
 >
 > The museum I visited had just recently opened in Tokyo, it was a large,
 > modern exhibit with many halls; I think it was a museum of the history of
 > Tokyo (not Japan); I'm sure it was not the Air Raid Centre. The exhibit on
 > bombing by Japan was just a small part.
 >
 > Are you saying that a figure of 950,000 killed includes Okinawa? That would
 > definitely conflict with the figure in Fog of War, which says 900,000 were
 > killed in the bombing of cities in Japan (a higher figure than I'd seen
 > elsewhere, but quite plausible). If Okinawan civilians are to be excluded,
 > that would leave only about 300,000 civilians killed in Japan, which seems
 > definitely too low.
 >
 > On your question about the firebombing and Hiroshima, my answer is no on the
 > second question, and/or: the firebombings were not undertaken in
 > anticipation of the A-bombings. On the first question, my answer is yes,
 > but "desensitize" (which may be the right word for the effects on human
 > reaction to the killings) is misleading as to the moral dimension. I would
 > say that regarding the slaughter of civilians as legitimate in the case of
 > the firebombings totally eliminated a moral dimension from consideration in
 > the case of the atom bombings, which differed from the firebombings only
 > with respect to technology, not any moral considerations so far as the
 > immediate victims were concerned. (Death by nuclear weapon is not
 > distinguishable, in any aspect relevant to moral consideration, from death
 > by firebomb, I would say, even considering radiation effects compared to
 > long-term fire injuries.) In terms of the long-run consequences for a
 > nuclear arms race and ultimate nuclear wars, of course, there is a
 > difference, but that was considered only by some of the scientists, not by
 > the military or civilian command. Incidentally, the legitimizing of mass
 > civilian slaughter during the firebombing did not only apply to military
 > leaders, but to the top civilians (notwithstanding Stimson's mealy-mouthed
 > and to me disgusting exhibition of denial, and dismay at the lack of
 > revulsion by "others").
 >
 > On Peter's message from Hamabe, very interesting. I would say the figure of
 > 66 (or 67? from Fog of War) cities deliberately targeted for
 > "indiscriminate" (actually, deliberately aimed at civilians) destruction is
 > a good figure for quoting. The higher figure includes cities damaged
 > without deliberate, highest-level intention of massacre. Incidentally,
 > early in the war in Europe, when British bombers announced they had
 > "attacked" (targeted) one city in Germany, Germans reported attacks on 23
 > cities; that's how good night navigation and target identification was at
 > that stage.
 >
 > Yours, Dan

Forwarded by Satoko Noj

[pmo](#)-----
From: Satoko Norimatsu

To:

Date:

Subject: Re: Casualties of air-bombings in Japan

Dear Peter,

Thank you for sharing such rich material on the U.S. leaders' and general public's sentiments on the firebombings in Japan. I feel disheartened to learn about all these. Kato Shuichi always stressed on the role of popular support in the escalation of state violence. Towns across Japan held lantern-parades when cities like Nanjing and Singapore fell. Tama, my mentor in Vancouver still remembers her participation in such a parade in her painful self-reflection. The general public was not made aware of the atrocities going on, but the despise and hatred towards Chinese was evident in many popular culture media. One of the popular cartoons during the war was Norakuro, in which Chinese were portrayed as pigs and spoke Japanese with derogatory accents.

One of the reasons why the research on firebombings in Japan were initiated mostly on the grass-roots level rather than the government or academia was the government's reluctance and refusal to provide the kind of compensation package they provided to the military personnel to the civilian victims of the war. My guess on the large number of military personnel in the stats of bombing victims in Japan were due to the large number of women and schoolage children mobilized to work in military factories and the survey considered those people as military personnel. I remember at Yasukuni Shrine Seiji told me some of these women and children are enshrined as war gods there. I will ask Seiji about these figures and get back to you. At the Tokyo Raid Centre I also watched an interesting film made in Japan in 1978 about the Tokyo Raid, for which the TV crew visited the New Port Beach home of then-72 year old Curtis LeMay. He let the crew in but refused to be interviewed, saying he had been retired and had forgotten all about the war. He only allowed them to film the medals of honour, but not himself. You probably know that Curtis LeMay was granted Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun by the Emperor in 1964 for his contribution for the establishment of Air Self-Defense Force in Japan. This matter was argued by some opposition MPs in the Congress, but never brought to the general public attention. I don't know how many of the bombing victims knew about this, but this would have been infuriating.

Have a great day!

Satoko

On Sat, 22 Aug 2009 10:31:20 EDT

Dear Satoko and Dan,
 Thanks for this fascinating exchange. I'm surprised that approximately 40 percent of those killed were military. I didn't realize the number was that high. Is that mostly in Okinawa? I just want to add a couple things. First I think Dan might be interested in a note Satoko sent me in regard to the number of cities firebombed:

Here is a rough translation of the reply from Mr. Yamabe. As I expected his reply is very detailed.

 The number of the Japanese cities bombed depends on whether you look from the perspective of US strategies or from the one of bombed cities. There were 5 original big city targets (note by Satoko: Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto) and two additional cities, Kawasaki and Amagasaki were bombed as well. There were 56 mid to small size cities targeted. When you add Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Naha which was bombed by ship airplanes, the number becomes 66.

There are 113 cities in Japan that were designated by the government as a 'city for reconstruction projects from war damages.' These cities include those that were severely damaged by precision bombings on military facilities, those that were not initial targets but bombed as 'targets of opportunity,' those bombed by ship planes, cities in the vicinity of the large cities that were bombed, and those damaged by naval bombardment. Naha was excluded. Saga, which was a target but not damaged, was excluded as well. The number of the cities is 108 now due to the municipal mergers.

 So according to Mr. Yamabe, the number of bombed cities is 66 from the US perspective and 113(now 108) from the Japanese perspective. This should explain the wide discrepancy between the regularly quoted 64 to 67 and Yuki Tanaka's 100+. It is not a surprise that 66 cities were targeted but 113 cities were actually affected.

Now which one are you going to quote?

Mr. Yamabe is an extremely resourceful person. I don't exactly know his background and I will find out, but Atsushi told me he was a central figure in designing and bringing life to Ritsumeikan's peace museum, where he worked as a curator before he came to Tokyo Air Raid museum. Second, I want to mention a few of the most poignant comments people, military and civilian, made in regard to the firebombings. I'll quote a few from my lecture notes. Dan probably knows them all, but they might be new to Satoko. When I give my long lecture on the bomb decision, I argue that two things helped shape the moral climate in which the atomic bombs were dropped--American wartime hatred of the Japanese (racial and non-racial) and the firebombings of Japanese cities. (Don't worry Dan. I'm not mitigating Stimson's guilt or responsibility. If anything, his misgivings make him more culpable.)

Brig. Gen. Bonner Fellers, aide to Gen. MacArthur, described US bombing of Japan in a confidential memo as "one of the most ruthless and barbaric killings of non-combatants in all history."

Oppenheimer: "I remember Mr. Stimson saying to me that he thought it appalling that there should be no protest over the air raids which we were conducting against Japan, which in the case of Tokyo led to such extraordinarily heavy loss of life. He didn't say that the air strikes shouldn't be carried on, but he did think there was something wrong with a country where no one questioned that."

Stimson told HT he "did not want to have the US get the reputation of outdoing Hitler in atrocities." (6/45)

Dyson was set to go to Okinawa as part of the Tiger Force fleet of 300 B. bombers: "I found this continuing slaughter of defenseless Jap. even more sickening than the slaughter of well-defended Germans. But still I did not quit. By that time I had been at war so long that I could hardly remember peace. No living poet had words to describe that emptiness of the soul which allowed me to go on killing without hatred and without remorse. But Shakespeare understood it, and he gave Macbeth the words: "...I am in blood/Stepp'd in so that, should I wade no more,/Returning were as tedious as go o'er."

Dwight Macdonald had captured this in the summer of 1945 even prior to Hiroshima: "I remember when Franco's planes bombed Barcelona for the first time what a thrill of unbelieving horror and indignation went through our nerves at the idea of hundreds--yes hundreds--of civilians being killed. It seems impossible that that was less than ten years ago. Franco's air force was a toy compared to the sky-filling bombing fleets deployed in this war, and the hundreds killed in Barcelona have become the thousands killed in Rotterdam and Warsaw, the tens of thousands in Hamburg and Cologne, the hundreds of thousands in Dresden, and the millions in Tokyo. A month ago, the papers reported that over one million Jap. men, women, and children had perished in the fires set by a single B-29 raid on Tokyo. One million. I saw no expression of horror or indignation in any Am. newspaper or mag. of sizeable circulation. We have grown callous to massacre, and the concept of guilt has spread to include whole pops. Our hearts are hardened, our nerves steady, our imaginations under control as we read the morning paper. King Mithridates is said to have immunized himself against poison by taking small doses which he increased slowly. So the gradually increasing horrors of the last decade have made each of us to some extent a moral Mithridates, immunized against human sympathy."

Gen. Ira Eaker: "Arnold feared the reaction of the U.S. public to urban area bombing of women and children. He pointed to the large percentage of German people in this country and those who felt we should not have become involved in a war with G. at all. [but] 90% of Ams. would have killed every Jap."

Carl Spaatz: "We didn't hear any complaints from the Am. people about mass bombing of Japan; as a matter of fact, I think they felt the more we did the better."

Colonel Harry Cunningham justified the policy of total war based on the assumption that the civilian pop. of Japan was a proper target: "We military men do not pull punches or put on Sunday School picnics. We are making War and making it in the all-out fashion which saves Am. lives, shortens the agony which War is and seeks to bring about an enduring Peace. We intend to seek out and destroy the enemy wherever he or she is, in the greatest possible numbers, in the shortest possible time. For us, THERE ARE NO CIVILIANS IN JAPAN."

Love,
 Peter

109 3:44:24 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time,
 I writes:

Dear Dan,
 Thank you for your reply, and your kind words. Yes please do share your research about guilt and shame.

I am curious to know which museum you meant by "Tokyo Museum." Is this Edo Tokyo Museum, this big structure near the Sumo Stadium? When did you visit there? Such a perspective as seeing firebombing of Japan as natural retaliation for their bombing operations in China is so rare that I am surprised you have seen such exhibit unless it was the Tokyo

Dear Satoko: I would VERY MUCH like to see the museum in Tokyo, and will certainly visit it next time I'm there. I've read almost everything I can

find on that bombing, which I think was a decisive turning-point in the actually operating normative framework of US decision-makers (not just the

Air Force). I think this massacre, largest in history (which was turned to

not "to win the war" but for operational reasons and postwar Service incentives) and the subsequent firebombing massacres of other Japanese cities did more than set the stage for the atomic bombings. They actually

deprived the latter of any moral challenge at all to those contemplating them. If the previous bombings were legitimate--which, astoundingly (even for that late stage of the war) no officials are on record as questioning--then

the use of the atom bombs, which were expected to do the same job on the same scale as Tokyo but with fewer planes (one each instead of 334) simply

did not raise any new moral issue at all! Most Americans, ignorant of the scale, impact and intent of the firebombing

campaign, have contemplated the decisions on the two atom bombs without any

awareness of the moral universe--if it can be called that, one in which constraints of "just means" and noncombatant immunity had simply been jettisoned-- that the high-level decision-makers actually inhabited by May-August 1945. They had been directing, evidently in good conscience (though Stimson asked for and got an absurd "assurance" from Hap Arnold that

they were not killing any more civilians than "necessary"--supposedly in pursuit of military targets), an effort to kill as many Japanese civilians

as possible for a period of five months before Hiroshima. And they had, according to the Fog of War, succeeded in killing 900,000 of them by then,

more even than the long-term total for the two A-bombs. (Some estimates are

lower; do you know of the reliability of various estimates, which of course,

must remain uncertain at best?) In fact, the horrific pictures of the burned victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki could just as well have been taken in Tokyo five months earlier; likewise, the razed city blocks. As I said, those terrible images do not convey at all the scale of the damage that would occur in a thermonuclear war. I was impressed, when I was last in Tokyo and visited the Tokyo Museum,

to

see an exhibit on the bombing of Chongqing; and an account that implied, as

I recall, that the Japanese military had pioneered in city-bombing (Shanghai

in 1932, as well as Chongqing) and for that reason, did not hold the firebombing of Japan as being as culpable as they might have otherwise, seeing it as natural retaliation. Do I remember this correctly? I would like to have more information about the bombing of Chongqing. As Peter probably told you, I was absolutely bowled over by your brilliant,

fluent and sensitive account of the tension between the words "guilt" and "shame" in Japanese/English translation. Sometime later, I'd like to share

with you some of the research I did a generation ago into that distinction.

Love, Dan
On Thu, Aug 20, 2009 at 3:02 AM, Satoko Norimatsu <
[v.com](#)> wrote:

Dear Dan,
Having read your response to Mark Selden, I also would like to add that I was touched, for a reason that's hard for me to explain, to see your mention of Tokyo Air Raid as the biggest single-day bombing massacre

in

history. If we ever get a chance to show you around in Tokyo, I would like to bring you to the Center of the Tokyo Air Raid and War Damages, located in the eastern part of Downtown Tokyo, which was in the middle of the hardest-hit area of Tokyo Air Raid of March 10, 1945. Peter and the AU students went there last year.
http://www.tokyo-sensai.net/english_page/index.html This summer they

> have been holding a special exhibit "Tokyo, Guernika, Chongqing" to

commemorate the publication of the fourth in the series of the Iwanami DVD Book Peace Archives with the same title. I visited the exhibit

with

my 82-year old father, whose house was burnt in the Yamanote bombing of May 25th. I was ashamed that being a Tokyo native, I did not even know the existence of this museum until I started working in this field.

The

| special exhibit was meaningful in a way that it covered the larger

> historical context of fire-bombing of cities, and for Japanese, many of

| who tend to just look at how their city was bombed, it was meaningful

to

| look at the brutal effects of the series of Chongqing bombing by their own military forces, years before their own cities started being

bombed.

I think even fewer percentage of Japanese know about bombings of Shanghai, Nanjing, and Chongqing than that of Americans who know about Tokyo bombings.
Thank you for your inspiration,

>

Satoko
On Sat, 8 Aug 2009 09:29:43 -0700
Daniel Ellsberg

>

| ----- Forwarded message -----

> From: Daniel Ellsberg ;

Date: Sat, Aug 8, 2009 at 9:29 AM
Subject: Re: purloined
To: mark selden

> > Dear Mark: Good work! Your pictures are a great addition; because

of

| them,

| I'll send your version out to friends. Does this mean the article

will

| be

> available in Japan? I emailed my friend Peter Kuznick, who is in

Japan

| this

| week, to try to place it on Japanese websites, but I haven't heard

back

| from

| him. Do you know a way to do that? (One point: Bob Scheer would appreciate, in future, that re-publication--which he

encourages--mention

| that it first appeared in truthdig.com.)
Thanks for the very moving essay and photos by slavick. One personal reaction, though, perhaps peculiar to me but of some significance

anyway:

| > whenever I read or see these horrific accounts of the personal

> experiences

| and injuries from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the thought always forces
| itself
| into my mind: A description of the experience and horror of the Tokyo
| firestorm would be (is, on the very rare occasions when one sees it)
| > exactly
| | the same. (Only the later, radiological suffering is different, and
not
| | in
| | kind of horror from the perspective of the victims). So what? Well,
on
| > the
| | one hand, ignoring this obscures the fact, unknown to nearly all
| Americans,
| | that the atom bombings proceeded "naturally" from a five-month
campaign
| | of
| > exactly equivalent people-killing under the direction of two
American
| | presidents (and one Secretary of War, and JCS: for all that Admiral
Leahy
| | protested against the "barbarity" of war against women and children
in
| | the
| | case of the A-bomb).
| | And second, it doesn't bring to mind something I tried to say in the
| article. The horror of suffering the A-bomb attacks was not
different in
| | kind or scale from the experience of the firebombing (except that
much of
| | > the injuries from fire and blast were experienced in the first
seconds or
| | minutes, rather than over one long night: which I doubt made all that
much
| | difference to the victims, though it is so much emphasized in
retrospective
| > accounts). But what was sure to FOLLOW in a few years from the
atom-bombs
| | was a destructive capability vastly different in scale from anything
in
| | World War II, either the earlier city-bombing or the atom bombs. As
I
| | said,
| | the terrible pictures you present with the article show only the
effects
| | of
| | exploding the DETONATOR of the weapons that comprise our strategic
arsenal
| | in the thousands.
| > I guess I'm saying that I wish that a powerful essay and photos like
| | slavick's also conveyed to the readers (as almost never happens)
these
| | two
| | aspects of the temporal and experiential context: on the one hand,
the

| | | continuity of the horror of burning humans alive whether by fission
bombs

| | or

| | earlier by firebombs, and on the other hand, the discontinuity of the
threat

| | to humanity that appeared with the explosion (of an H-bomb) that
showered

| | the Lucky Dragon with radioactive ash 85 miles away from the blast.

>

| | Of course, these thoughts of mine don't detract from the power of the
piece

| | you sent. Thank you for sending it.
Yours, Dan

> >

| | On Fri, Aug 7, 2009 at 5:39 PM, mark selder. [mark.selder@gmail.com](#)
wrote:

>

| | Dear Dan,

> > > We took the liberty of heisting your great memoir and adding a few
graphics

| | at The Asia-Pacific Journal.
<http://japanfocus.org/-Daniel-Ellsberg/3201>

> > > You'll find some other pretty good company around our site . . .

Peter

| | | Kuznick, Larry Wittner, Mel Gurtov, Yuki Tanaka,
Marilyn Young, Noam, Jonathan Schell and the Mayors of Hiroshima

and

| | | Nagasaki among others.

> > >

| | | But here's something that you might not run across:
<http://japanfocus.org/-elin o Hara-slavick/3196>

> > > Keep us posted on what you're doing and we'll try to air it as
possible.

| | Inspired by your wonderful work.
mark

| Satoko Norimatsu

>

| Peace Philosophy Centre
- for Soil, Soul, and Society -
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| | Email
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----- Original Message Ends -----